

The Augustine Fellowship, S.L.A.A.
Fellowship-Wide Services, Inc.



ANONYMITY, THE LAW AND S.L.A.A.

Reviewed, and amended by the Board of Trustees May, 2013.

During the years of The Augustine Fellowship, S.L.A.A., Fellowship-Wide Services, Inc.'s existence, several inquiries have come to our attention regarding disclosure of illegal or dangerous acts by members or to members. As we are all governed by our own conscience, we do encourage members to study and understand the Traditions of our program to assist in group conscience/ individual decisions on matters associated with crimes/illegal activity. Various scenarios/hypothetical have been posed:

- A member tells us that s/he is HIV positive and having unprotected sex with people.
- A member reports that s/he has committed a sex crime against an adult.
- A member reports that s/he has committed a sex crime against a minor.
- A member reports that s/he is committing incest.
- A member reports that their spouse/partner/child is committing crimes or engaged in illegal activity.
- A member reports that s/he has committed a crime or is engaged in illegal activity.
- A member commits a crime or illegal act at a meeting or against another member of the program.
- A member tells their story, which involves an illegal act, to a sponsor/sponsee or at a meeting.
- A member reports that s/he is a recent or ongoing victim of a sex crime, incest/molestation, or illegal activity.
- A member is arrested due to a crime and the police are asking members outside of the meeting for details about the person/crime.

In all cases, the following is suggested:

- People must remember when they are sharing at a meeting, with their sponsor/sponsee, or fellow members, that anonymity does not exempt them from repercussions for their actions. Also they must understand that anonymity IS NOT the same thing as a legal privilege.
- Although, people at the meetings are attending for their own recovery, we are powerless over an individual's moral conscience and the choice of that person to report such acts to the legal authorities.
- Depending on the law of the country/state in which you are, meeting attendees/listeners may be found to be liable in a civil action for failure to act on information.
- Meetings should check with the laws of their state/country as to what the responsibility of each individual may be in reporting crimes or illegal activity.
- If a crime or illegal activity is happening currently, it is the policy of the F.W.S. office to advise the victim to contact the police or legal authorities accordingly.
- There is a distinction between the individual members, the groups, the Conference and F.W.S. They are all separate entities and are responsible only to themselves.
- Members should remember that there might be individuals attending the meeting who are mandated to report crimes/illegal activity including: social workers, teachers, and law enforcement personnel (this has recently been expanded in at least one U.S. States to include anyone, not just certain professionals – check your local laws to ascertain if you are under a duty to report).

Some groups have chosen to include a statement within their format to specifically address this issue. An example follows:

“The Foundation of Anonymity

Anonymity is the foundation of our program. It is essential if we are to continue the 12 Step work of S.L.A.A. ... However even this basic principle may give way to the pressure of individual consciences or legal requirements. Therefore we, the members of this S.L.A.A. meeting, make clear to newcomers and old timers alike that speaking of any potentially illegal activity, especially relating to minors, endangers the speaker and lays a burden of knowledge on others that they may not be willing to assume. This includes statements made individually to members, including to your sponsor, which is not a legally protected relationship.”

This represents the BOT and F.W.S.'s recommendations, considering the Traditions in conjunction with our attorney. The BOT does not discourage legal compliance or the reporting of criminal activity. Nothing in this Statement should be interpreted to imply otherwise.